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## Press Release

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### **State investment in seed potatoes paying off**

Anchorage, Alaska – A years-long public-private partnership aimed at creating a potential \$1.5 billion export market for Alaska-grown seed potatoes is bearing fruit for the state and its agriculture sector.

Representatives from the Governor's Office, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, and Division of Agriculture met this week with business representatives from China and Idaho to discuss the progress of arrangements for lab-tested, disease-free seed potatoes grown on farms in Delta Junction and the Mat-Su valleys to be exported to China.

Idaho agribusiness Larsen Farms, one of the largest producers and exporters of potatoes in the United States, has agreed to use its contacts within China to facilitate the export process. Larsen has signed contracts with Alaska farmers to produce mini-tubers and seed potatoes for export and will cover the remainder of the logistical trail required to get the seed potatoes to farms in China.

"This is a great opportunity, with tremendous economic potential, for local farmers and the state of Alaska," said Susan Bell, commissioner of the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. "The return on investment of public money that went toward the testing and development of viable seed stock will be substantial. We appreciate the Alaska Manufacturing Extension Partnership for recognizing the importance of this project and the job-creating potential of Alaska farmers expanding their acreage up to tenfold to meet export needs."

AMEP appropriated \$250,000 from a DCCED grant to cover the costs of phytosanitary lab testing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. AMEP will be working with Larsen Farms, the importer in China, Alaska farmers and UAF scientists to develop a funding mechanism to make the export program self-sustaining.

Current year expectation is to produce 500 tons of Alaska seed potatoes and mini-tubers for export. This is a fraction of the approximately 1.5 million tons needed each year to



meet the needs of China and Taiwan, which allow only Alaska seed potatoes to be imported because of strict phytosanitary standards.

“We are pleased to partner with the state in this worthwhile economic development project,” said Mark Stearns, chairman of the AMEP Board of Directors and president of Alaska Wood Moulding and TaskKlock, Inc. “This is part of our mission to strengthen Alaska communities and improve the competitiveness of small manufacturers.”

